



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to President Martti Ahtisaari, Special Envoy of the CiO to Central Asia

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 2, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States joins the other participating States in welcoming President Ahtisaari back to the Permanent Council, and appreciates his apprising us of his recent activities in and his contacts with the countries of Central Asia.

In your last address to this body and again today, Mr. President, you stressed the importance of strengthening regional cooperation among the countries of Central Asia.

Whether it be cross-border issues related to stopping narcotics trafficking, or initiatives aimed at boosting inter-communal trade, we agree that there is a substantial need and an opportunity for these linkages to increase.

We also appreciate your reaffirming a key concept of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security in our times: namely, that the three dimensions are interdependent and that they cannot be treated in isolation. Sustained economic development – something which we focus on so much in this organization and wonder how much we really achieve – clearly cannot be achieved without democracy and the rule of law to underpin it; true security clearly cannot exist where media freedom and fair elections are stifled.

With regard to Turkmenistan, while we are relieved that the law criminalizing unregistered NGOs has been removed, we are eager to see civil society organizations registering and operating unhindered. We urge the Government of Turkmenistan to remove additional constraints on NGO activity. In addition, we join you in urging the Turkmen authorities to cooperate with the High Commissioner for National Minorities and with the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC). Specifically, we hope that Commissioner Ekeus is at least extended a concrete invitation to visit Turkmenistan very soon in the next few months and that the visit will be able to take place in that same timeframe. We also hope that an agreement for ICRC prison access will materialize in the same timeframe or earlier.

With a view towards reinforcing and broadening the progress towards stability and security that has been made thus far in the region, the United States again expresses its strong support for increased OSCE engagement in Central Asia. We look forward to hearing, from the Special Representative and from our Central Asian colleagues, substantive ideas on how that objective might best be achieved.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

